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HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WEST.

BY WILLIAM R. HARPER, PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY
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It is not uncommon to observe and to make remark upon the changes which have taken place in the world of higher education within the last ten or twenty years. Much has been said of the growth of institutions in numbers, scope and efficiency. Much has been said, likewise, of the modifications in the subject matter of the curriculum and in methods of work. We are led almost to believe that, not only in higher realms, but in the lower, education to-day is a wholly different matter from that of former times. For my own part, I am inclined to think that change, in so far as it has taken place, is, generally speaking, a matter of form rather than of essence. The result gained by education to-day is probably the same that our ancestors secured, whatever methods they employed. We have yet to learn, perhaps, that it is with education as with religion: access to heaven is no longer restricted, even by the most rigid sectarians, to a single path. It is important for educators to keep in mind that formal training is a thing of varied possibilities, and that for different individuals, of different temperament, of different geographical locality or different social environment, there may be different methods; and that, just as many roads led to Rome, in fact all of them, so there are many curricula and many schedules of work and many varieties of method to be counted and considered.

But there is one question, out of the great number connected with this subject of modification in educational work and of differentiation in educational policy, which, perhaps, deserves special mention. That question is this: Is there something in the Eastern institutions of higher education which is not to be

found in the Western, and is there something in the Western institutions which the Eastern do not have? Has the differentiation between East and West developed types of education which may in any respect be called different? We are not to forget, of course, that a large number of Western men are in Eastern institutions; and that a comparatively small number of students go from the East to the West. It is also true that in the faculties of Eastern institutions are many men who, by birth and spirit, are Western men. On the other hand, a still larger number of men in Western faculties are Eastern in their birth and education. I ought to add that my question has to do rather with college work and life than with university work and life.

Is Western college life more modern than the Eastern? So some maintain. Altogether too large a proportion of our college life and work is, perhaps, still mediæval in its character. Here belongs everything which suggests that the student has rights and privileges other than those of an ordinary citizen; that he is to be treated on a different basis, or that there shall be a different standard by which his actions shall be weighed. It is in accordance with this mediæval spirit that the incoming freshmen must be hazed, and that the police authorities are not to exercise control over a university campus; that a crowd of students may make themselves obnoxious in a theatre, or that men, because they are students, are privileged in the exercise of vandalism. Everything that would encourage the student to believe that he is a superior person, or a person of another caste, is a survival of mediævalism, and this spirit, many tell us, exists in Eastern colleges, large and small, to an extent practically unknown in the West. Moreover, according to mediæval custom, the members of a faculty were officers of state in authority over the students. Because of this relationship, there was always hostility between the faculty and the student body. The more modern idea makes the student and the professor brothers in the pursuit of knowledge, the younger brother guided by the older; both students, and both of them brothers. As a result of this fraternal relationship, a degree of intimacy exists between professor and student which was unknown in former years. It is maintained by many that this close relationship of student and instructor is much more common in the West than in the East. If now these two contentions can be made good, it might surely

be claimed that the ideas which control college life and work in the West are more modern than those which ordinarily prevail in the East. It may seem upon consideration that the mediæval presents a higher ideal than the modern. It is quite certain that, in the points just mentioned, as well as in others which might be presented by way of illustration, the mediæval is more attractive to the student himself. It is, undoubtedly, a source of gratification to feel that through the college one enters into the privileges of a special and higher caste; but this is not the modern democratic spirit; and, however fully the democratic spirit may be developed as among the members of the upper class, if that spirit is not manifest toward those outside of the class, it is a false rather than a true view of democracy which prevails.

Moreover, in so far as the feeling of the student body towards a faculty is simply that which those who are in supremacy themselves entertain toward a higher authority, and an authority which perhaps exercises more rigid surveillance than is needful, reserving rights which ordinarily might be assumed by the student body itself—in so far, I say, as the body of students acts upon the assumption that any privilege which they might secure, whether by fair means or foul, is theirs to enjoy, just to this extent is the relationship one which is characterized by the unfortunate and hurtful elements that once made up what we now call “mediævalism,” a spirit distinctly opposed to that of modern progress.

Still further, the policy, which still prevails so largely in the Eastern college life, of placing men in one institution and women in another is unquestionably an ancient and not a modern policy. In this respect, the Western institutions, which are prevailing coeducational, have made large advance upon the East. If anything in the development of educational policy has been worked out, it is that the present coeducational policy of the West is a stage of development higher and more advanced than the stage which is represented in the East by separate institutions for men and women. The spirit which opens the doors of every educational institution to women as well as to men is, if I may use a questionable phrase, splendidly modern in contrast with the older spirit of the monastery and the convent. Because I believe in the principle of evolution, at all events as applied to

educational progress, I am convinced that there is something still higher in educational policy in connection with this question of coeducation than has yet been reached; but the higher development will always include close relationship of men and women in college life, and the extension of equal privileges by the same institution to persons of both sexes. In all this, it may surely be maintained that the West is more modern than the East.

Is the spirit of the Western institution more natural and less artificial, perhaps, than that of the Eastern institution? It is possible that this is only putting what I have already said in another form. Surely, it is a more natural view of the situation, as well as a more modern view, that the student is to be treated as any other member of a civilized community, and accorded no special privileges because he is a student. It may also be claimed that the fraternal relationship between instructor and student is more natural than the relationship suggested by that of strict officialism. It may with equal force be said that the co-educational policy, as thus far developed, is a more natural policy and less artificial than that of education in separate institutions. But it is possible to go further, and to consider whether a more natural situation may not be found to exist in at least two other points. The life of the average student in the Western college is a more natural life, in that it is largely devoid of those artificial elements which connect themselves with the expenditure of large sums of money. It is the exception if a student in an institution west of New York and Pennsylvania spends eight hundred or a thousand dollars a year. It is probably an exception when a student in an Eastern institution, especially the larger institutions, spends a smaller sum than eight hundred to a thousand dollars. This single fact is an index of a different kind of life. It may not be argued that the Eastern student in spending more money gets a larger return; for this difference in amount expended represents the gratification of acquired tastes and the formation of artificial habits of life which are injurious to the extent in which they are artificial.

The relationship which has hitherto existed between institutions of college and university grades and secondary schools, including academies, appears to be another illustration of the acceptance of the artificial rather than the natural. To lay emi-

phasis upon the examination method as a basis for entrance to college; to increase, from time to time, the requirements for admission; and to hold, as has been the practice until more recent times, the work of the college and the work of the secondary schools so definitely apart, the one from the other, is to lay emphasis upon an artificial distinction, a distinction which has neither a logical nor a pedagogical basis. Happily, the influence of the West in this particular is already manifesting itself very plainly in Eastern circles. Nothing has been more marked than the breaking down of the exclusiveness of the New England college and university. In so far as this exclusiveness continues, a greater artificiality may be claimed as existing in the East. Perhaps all this may be summed up in the statement that the Western institution is more democratic in the life of its students, in its relations to institutions of a lower grade, and, above all, in its relations to the public at large. This is, undoubtedly, due to the establishment of the State Universities, and the contribution of this class of institutions to the cause of higher education has been seen nowhere more clearly than in the tendency which is thereby prompted toward the breaking down of class distinctions. The influence of these institutions provided by the people and supported directly by public funds is very pronounced upon institutions built on private foundations. The establishment of a great State University, like that of Michigan, or Wisconsin, or Illinois, in the heart of New England would radically change the development of higher education in that region of our country. This larger democratic influence in the West represents most completely the proposition which I have tried to maintain, that higher education, in its various tendencies, has shown less of that which we may call "artificial" in the West than in the East.

This leads me to suggest still a third question. Is our higher education in the West more practical than that of the East? Much that I have already said might perhaps be included under this question, for that which is more modern and more natural may at the same time be thought more practical. By "practical" I do not mean "utilitarian," although this side of education must be considered at its full value. The work of the Western student is more practical in that he more frequently has in mind a definite purpose, something distinctly tangible. He is aiming to

accomplish something. Few students in a Western institution enter college simply because it is the fashion to take a college course, or because their fathers before them had passed through such a course, or in order to spend a few years which cannot easily be provided for in some better way. In other words, the Western student is in college because he appreciates the fact that the preparation which it furnishes will improve his opportunities in life. This does not mean that he selects only those subjects which bear upon the particular profession which he has chosen, although this may be done. It means, rather, that he is working toward a definite plan, controlled by a strong purpose to accomplish a certain thing, and further, that, in the large majority of instances, this purpose is being executed at a sacrifice either on the part of the student or on the part of those who support him. His point of view is different; and, consequently, a practical coloring pervades and penetrates his work. This same point is seen in another fact that institutions in the West have recognized earlier and more definitely, that the college training may be secured through the study of matters which stand in close touch with life, as well as through those subjects which are more remotely connected with it. The closer identification of professional training and college training is one of the great tendencies of modern times which has been more plainly emphasized in the West. The point I have in mind is illustrated by the fact that Harvard is to-day only beginning to introduce courses of instruction in technological subjects, and by that other fact, which, for a quarter of a century or more, has seemed a sort of enigma—the sharp line of distinction which has existed between Yale College and the Sheffield Scientific School. Here, again, the State Universities have been leaders; and their pioneer work, which was necessarily practical because of its close connection with the hearts of the people, has exercised in the past and is exercising in the present a tremendous influence upon higher education throughout the country, in demonstrating the possible efficiency of a more practical higher education.

My last question grows out of all the rest, and is again a summary of those that have preceded it. Is the student life and the student work of the Western institution more serious than that of the Eastern institution? To maintain this would, perhaps, be making an unjustifiable charge against the other institutions

from which have come the source of our strength; for who does not recognize the fact that it has been Harvard and Yale and Brown and Amherst and Williams, and a score of other names equally well known, that have given us in the West our ideals and our teachers? It is impossible for me to express a sentiment which would, in any way, reflect upon the past or the present greatness and efficiency of institutions that have contributed so greatly to the prosperity and welfare of our nation. But it is not I who raise this question. Within three months, seven college and university professors or presidents have in my hearing asked it. Ordinarily one might say that the answer must be affirmative, if what has already been said is true. If Western education is more modern, more natural and more practical, it ought to be more serious. Is it true, as the representatives of Eastern institutions themselves have said, that, in the larger and to some extent in the smaller colleges, it has ceased to be the proper thing, indeed the regular thing, for men to study? Is it true that a change has come over Eastern college life, and that to-day serious study on the part of the students is no longer a recognized part of college life, or that it is so inconsiderable a factor in that life as to occasion apprehension and alarm? Is it true that certain men well known in Eastern circles have given this question very careful attention, and are hoping for a solution, at least in part, to come out of the growing influence of Western higher education upon the East? I have heard these questions asked and answered affirmatively by representative Eastern educators; men whose candor was surpassed only by the intense anxiety which filled their souls upon this point.

Whatever may be said of the East, no man can yet say that in our Western institutions, through and through, there does not exist a spirit as serious as any that has characterized the student of any age or country; a spirit which poverty cannot repress; a spirit of devotion and consecration to life and to life's ideals than which no higher has been known in history. I have not suggested that this same spirit is not found in Eastern institutions. To do so would be to belie the truth as it is known to all men. I have simply repeated the question which Eastern educators are asking, whether the serious spirit does not prevail more extensively in the Western institution than in the Eastern.

WILLIAM R. HARPER.